Grace Brown to Chester Gillette

Woman's Simple Documents That Made a Criminal Case Famous and Virtually Sealed the Fate of a Murderer When Read to the Jury That Tried Him for His Life.

Herkimer, N. Y.—Printed below are letters which, within the past few weeks, have become known almost from one end of the country to the other as "Grace Brown's letters." They need no introduction, save perhaps the statement that these are the letters which were read at the trial of Chester Gillette.

They formed the most remarkable feature of that case. The whole structure of the prosecuting attorney was built upon them. It passes understanding why the murderer of the girl should have preserved a series of documents which, it is safe to say, spelled his doom from the moment they were placed in the hands of a jury of 12 men. It is inconceivable that Gillette kept them for their pathos, or the gentleness of character which they revealed, for he is not the kind of a man to whom such things appeal. It is utterly improbable that he ever recognized in them a simple literary beauty, although such they do possess in an unusual degree—the more unusual when it is remembered that Grace Brown was a country girl of plain education, who had worked as a factory hand.

Yet somehow Gillette kept them, and the American public has come into the possession of one of the most remarkable series of documents that ever appeared in a criminal case. As a revelation of character, as the written record of a tortured soul, they have already taken a place unique in the annals of real life tragedies.

Here are the letters:

"I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN"

"But Somehow I Have Trusted You More Than Any One Else."

South Otselic, [illegible], 1906.

Wednesday Night—My Dear Chester: I am just ready for bed and am so ill I could not help writing to you.

Chester, I came home because I thought I could trust you. I don't think now I will be here after next Friday. This girl wrote me that you seemed to be having an awfully good time and she guessed that my coming home had done you good, as you had not seemed so cheerful in weeks. She also said that you spent most of your time with that detestable Grace Hill.

Now, Chester, she does not know I dislike Miss Hill and so did not write that because she knew it would make me feel badly, but just because she didn't think. I should have known, Chester, that you did not care for me. But somehow I have trusted you more than anyone else. Whenever the other girls have said hateful things to me of you I could not believe them. You told me—even promised me—you would have nothing to do with her while I was gone.

Perhaps, Chester, you don't think or you can't help making me grieve, but I wish things were different. You may say you do, too, but you can't possibly wish so more than I. I have been very brave since I came home, but to-night I am very discouraged. Chester, if I could only die. I know how you feel about this affair and I wish for your sake you need not be troubled. If I die I hope you can then be happy. I hope I can die. The doctor says I will, and then you can do just as you like. I am not the least bit offended with you, only I am a little blue to-night and I feel this way.

I miss you. Oh, dear, you don't know how much I miss you. Honestly, dear, I am coming back next week unless you can come for me right away. I am so lonesome I can't stand it. Week ago to-night we were together. Don't you remember how I cried, dear? I have cried like that nearly all the time since I left Cortland. I am awfully blue.

Now, dear, let me tell you. You will get this Monday some time. Now you please write me Monday night and be sure and post it Tuesday morning and then I will get it, or ought to, Wednesday morning. I just want to see what the trouble is why I don't hear from you. I was telling mamma yesterday how you wrote and I never got it, and she said: "Why, Billy, if he wrote you would have received it."

She did not mean anything, but I was mad, and said: "Mamma, Chester never lied to me, and I know he wrote." If you were only here, dear, how glad I would be.

Don't you think I am awfully brave? I am doing so much better than I thought I should. I think about you, dear, all the time and wonder what you are doing. I am so frightened, dear. Maude has invited me down for next Tuesday, but I don't think I can go. Oh, say, if you post a letter to me Tuesday morning I will get it Tuesday night. Well, dear, they are calling me to dinner and I will stop. Please write or I will be crazy. Be a good kid and God bless you. Lovingly,

THE KID.

P. S.—I am crying.

"COME AND TAKE ME AWAY"

"There Isn't a Girl in the World as Miserable as I Am To-night."

South Otselic, June 20th, 1906, Tuesday Night—My Dear Chester: I am writing to tell you that I am coming back to Cortland. I simply can't stay here any longer. Mumma worries and wonders why I cry so much, and I am just about sick. Please come and take me away some place, dear. I came up home this morning and I just can't help crying all the time, just as I did Saturday night.

I can't stay here, dear, and please don't ask me to any longer. Do you miss me much? I am so lonesome without you. I don't know how I am going to manage about going to Uncle Charles'. I presume I will have to write you to meet me in Cincinnatus, now we don't know anyone there. Chester, there isn't a girl in the world as miserable as I am to-night, and you have made me feel so. Chester, I don't mean that, dear; you have always been awfully good to me, and I know you will always be. You just won't be a coward, I know. My brothers and sisters are at a social reception to-night, but they can't get over my crying.

I do wish you were here. I can't wait so long for letters, dear. You must write more often, please, and, dear, when you read my letters, if you think I am unreasonable, please do not mind it, but do think I am about crazy with grief and that I don't know just what to do. Please write to me, dear.

Lovingly, you know whom.

South Otselic, June 19, 1906.

"THERE ARE SO MANY NOOKS"

"I Have Been Bidding Good-bye to Some Places To-day."

South Otselic, July 6, Thursday Night—My Dear Chester: If you take the 9:45 train from the Lehigh, there, you will get here about 11. I am sorry I could not go to Hamilton, dear, but papa and mamma did not want me to, and there are so many things I have had to work hard for in the last two weeks. They think I am just going out there to Deruyter for a visit. Now, dear, when I get there I will go at once to the hotel, and I don't think I will see any of the people. If I do, and they ask me to come to the house, I will say something so they won't mistrust anything—tell them I have a friend coming from Cortland and that we were to meet there to go to a funeral or wedding in some town farther along. Awfully stupid, but we were invited to come, and so I had to cut my vacation a little short and go. Will that be O. K., dear?

You must come in the morning, for I have had to make you don't know how many new plans since your last letter, in order to meet you Monday. I dislike waiting until Monday, but now that I have to, I don't think it anything but fair that you should come up Monday morning. But, dear, you must see the necessity yourself of getting here and not making me wait. If you dislike the idea of coming Monday morning and can get a train up there Sunday night, you would come up Sunday night and be there to meet me. Perhaps that would be the best way. All I care is that I don't want to wait there all day or half a day. I think there is a train that leaves the Lehigh at six something Sunday night. I do not know what I would do if you were not to come. I am about crazy. I have been bidding good-by to some places to-day. There are so many nooks, dear, and all of them so dear to me. I have lived here nearly all my life.

First I said good-by to the spring house with its great masses of green moss; then the apple tree where we had our playhouse; then the "Beehive," a cute little house in the orchard, and, of course all the neighbors that have mended my dresses from a little tot up to save me a threshing I really deserved.

"Oh, dear, you don't realize what all this means to me. I know I shall never see any of them again, and mamma, great Heaven, how I do love mamma! I don't know what I will do without her. She is never cross and she always helps me so much. Sometimes I think if I tell mamma—but I can't. She has trouble enough as it is, and I couldn't break her heart like that.

If I came back dead, perhaps, if she doesn't know, she won't be angry with me. I will never be happy again, dear.

I wish I could die. You will never know what you have made me suffer, dear. I miss you and want to see you, but I wish I could die. I am going to bed now, dear. Please come and don't make me wait there. If you had made plans for something Sunday, you must come Monday morning.

Please think, dear, that I had to give up a whole summer's pleasure and you surely will be brave enough to give up one evening for me. I shall expect and look for you Monday forenoon.

Heaven bless you until then.

Lovingly and with kisses,

THE KID.

P. S.—Please come up Sunday night, dear.

"CAN'T YOU COME TO ME?"

"Chester, I Need You More Than You Think I Do."

South Otselic, June 26, 1906, Monday Night—Dear Chester: I am much too tired to write a decent letter or even follow the line, but I have been uneasy all day, and I can't go to sleep because I am sorry I sent you such a hateful letter this morning, so I am going to write and ask your forgiveness, dear. I was cross and wrote things I ought not to have written. I am sorry, dear, and I shall never feel quite right about all this until you write and say you forgive me. I was ill and did not realize what I was writing, and then this morning mamma gave my letters to papa before I was down. I should not have had it posted but it went long before I was awake. I am very tired to-night, dear. I have been helping mamma sew to-day. My sister is making me a new white Peter Pan suit, and I do get so tired having it fitted, and then there are other tired and tired. I never liked to have dresses fitted, and now it is ten times worse. Oh! Chester, you will never know how glad I shall be when this worry is all over. I am making myself ill over it. Maybe there is no use to worry, but I do and I guess everyone does. I am quite brave to-night, and I always feel better after I write you, Chester, so I hope you mind the hateful things I say and I hope you won't mind my writing so much. Where do you suppose we will be two weeks from to-night? I wish you would write and tell me, dear, all about your coming. I am awfully afraid I can't go to Hamilton, Chester.

Papa can't take me and I am nervous about going alone. You see I would have to ride quite a distance before I could take the train and then there is a long wait, and, Chester, I am getting awfully sensitive. If I can't go up there what shall I do? Do you think it would be wise to come back there? Could you come to Deruyter and meet me? I have relatives there, but perhaps I could arrange it somehow. I was pleased yesterday morning. You know I have a lot of bed quilts—six, I guess—and I was asking mamma where they were and saying I wished I had a dozen, when my little sister said: "Just you and someone else will not need so many." Of course my face got crimson and the rest of the family roared. Mamma is so nice about fixing my dresses; she has them all up now in nice shape. You remember the white dress I wore and you once asked me why I didn't have a new yoke. Well, she has almost made a new dress out of that. I am afraid the time will seem awfully long before I see you, Chester. I wish you would always post your letters in the morning after you write them or the same night. They are a day later here if you wait until noon. Of course I will be glad to get them, only I dislike waiting for them.

Oh! dear, I do get so blue, Chester. Please don't wait until the last of the week before you come. Can't you come the first of the week? Chester, I need you more than you think I do. I really think it will be impossible for me to stay here any longer than this week. I want to please you, but I think, Chester, it would be very unwise.

If I should stay here and anything should happen I would always regret it for your sake. You do not know papa as well as I do, and I would not like you to be disgraced here. We have both suffered enough and I would rather go away quietly. In a measure I will suffer the more, but I will not complain if you will not get cross and will come for me. I must close. Write me Wednesday night, dear, and tell me what you think about everything. Let's not leave all our plans until the last moment, and, above all, please write and say you forgive me for that letter I sent you this morning. I am sorry and if I were there I know you would say it would be all O. K.

Lovingly,

THE KID.

"MY LITTLE SISTER CAME"

"I Told Her I Guessed My Fortune Was Pretty Well Told Now."

South Otselic, June 23d, 1906, Sunday Night—My Dear Chester: I was glad to hear from you and surprised as well. I thought you would rather have my letters affectionate, but yours was so businesslike that I have come to the conclusion that you wish mine to be that way. I may tell you, though, that I am not a business woman, and so presume that these letters will not satisfy you any more than the others did. I would not like to have you think I was not glad to hear from you, for I was very glad, but it was not the kind of letter I had hoped to get from you.

I think, pardon me, that I understand my position and that it is rather unnecessary for you to be so frightfully frank in showing it to me. I can see my position as keenly as anyone, I think. You say you were surprised, but you thought I would be discouraged. I don't see why I should be discouraged. What words have I had from you since I came home to encourage me?

You write as though I was the one to blame because the girls wouldn't come. I invited them here because I thought I wouldn't be so lonesome. I am sure I cannot help it because mamma is away. As to the financial difficulty, I am the one who will be most affected by that. You say "your trip." Won't it be your trip as well as mine? I understand how you feel about the affair. You consider me as something troublesome that you bothered with. You think if it wasn't for me you could do as you liked all summer and not be obliged to give up your position there. I know how you feel, but once in awhile you make me see these things a great deal more plainly than ever.

Chester, I don't suppose you will ever know how I regret being all this trouble to you. I know you hate me, and I can't blame you one bit. My whole life is ruined, and in a measure yours is, too. Of course, it's worse for me than for you, but the world and you, too, may think I am the one to blame, but somehow I can't, just simply can't think that I am, Chester. I said No so many times, dear. Of course, the world will not know that, but it's true all the same.

My little sister came up just a minute ago with her hands full of daisies and asked if I didn't want my fortune told. I told her I guessed it was pretty well told now. I don't want you to mind this letter, for I am blue to-night and get so mad when the girls write things about me. Your letter was nice, and I was glad to get it. I simply feel "out of sorts" to-night.

When you are cross, just think I am sick and can't help all this. If you were me, you couldn't help finding fault, I know. I don't dare think how glad I will be to see you. If you wrote me a letter like this I wouldn't write in a long time, but I know you won't tease me in that way. You will just forget it and be your own dear self. You know I always am cross in the beginning. It was that way Saturday night, so don't be angry, dear.

Lovingly. KID.

BACK THROUGH THE RAT HOLE

By DENNIS H. STOVALL

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Warden Allison closed the heavy door of the Rat Hole, and followed the narrow corridor to the rear entrance of his residence at the end of the prison yard wall. It was just 6:30, and the night shift prisoners, with the regular, "hip-tramp, hip-tramp," of the lock-step, were marching out, single file, to go on duty in the smoky foundry.

It had been a hard day for the warden, as a bevy of new convicts had been received that afternoon from various counties of the state. But the night promised even more difficult things for him; not in the doing of prison duties, but in things domestic. Just three weeks before, Warden Allison had become a happy father, and since that eventful day he, too, had been on the night shift.

He entered the kitchen door and hung his hat on the prong of a deer antler in the rear hall. Then, removing his heavy shoes, took his slippers from their accustomed place behind the closet door, and stepping into them, settled comfortably in his easy chair before the dining-room grate.

Twenty minutes later the big brass gong sounded from the prison yard. "Last call to work," said he, arousing himself and tip-toeing upstairs to a dimly-lighted bedroom. His wife was sleeping soundly. He crept softly to a large clothes basket beside the bed, and removing the covering, lifted out Fred W. Allison, Jr., carrying him carefully down to the big chair before the fire.

Though Fred was but three weeks of age, he had already established a rule of absolute regularity in the taking of his meals. If the man of the night shift was neglectful or forgetful, Fred had a most effective way of reminding him.

Side by side on the mantel, set a long-stemmed pipe and a long-necked bottle. They both came off the shelf together, for both senior and junior Allison took refreshment at the same time. Fred opened his eyes blinkingly, and dug his fists into his cheeks a little fretfully when his father held the bottle over the grate to warm. With the nipple properly adjusted and placed, Allison lighted his pipe and leaned back comfortably, while Fred tugged at the bottle.

But the baby and the bottle did not get along well together. The youngster would pull viciously at the nipple for a while, and then let go, emitting a yell that was anything but pleasant to his father; also, it made smoking very difficult. The baby lost the nipple as fast as it was replaced. The wails grew louder and more frequent, and impressed Allison with a real sense of foreboding. He gave up his attempt at smoking, and replaced the pipe on the mantel, with the remark that there "was goin' to be something doin'."

In the almost musty recesses of his memory, were sundry recollections of baby colic, and these all returned to him now with remarkable clearness. Fred closed his eyes, clinched his fists and released a shrieking, long-drawn yell. He squirmed and kicked furiously. There was no mistaking them—the symptoms were genuine—the young man had a bad attack of baby colic.

Allison realized that something must be done. The hired girl was gone, (she refused to stay in the warden's house over night.) So it was up to him to relieve the youngster. He made a mental inventory of everything he had ever heard discussed or recommended for baby colic. Man-like, the first and most prominent that came to his mind was whiskey. Yes, four or five drops of pure rye in a teaspoonful of warm water.

The whiskey jug always reposed on the lower pantry shelf. Allison drew the kicking, squalling youngster closer to him, and arose to take the shortest route to the pantry. He was halted abruptly in the kitchen door, for he had thrust his face into the black muzzle of a prison arsenal rifle. In the half darkness of the kitchen, he saw a rough-shaven face and smooth-shaven head. Also he saw the form of a man in stripes.

Fred junior ceased yelling just long enough for the armed convict to make his presence known. "Sorry to disturb you, boss, but I must have the keys to the outer wall gate."

The warden recognized the voice of Kelly, trusty No. 1055, the only man of the night shift who was allowed the privilege of passing through the Rat Hole.

"Why so?" the warden replied, very calmly, for he was a man whom sudden calamity could not frenzy.

"Because we need it to open the only door that stands in the way of freedom."

"Then there's going to be a break?" Allison inquired, but the reply, which he knew to be an affirmative one, was smothered by another screeching yell from the youngster.

"I can't give you the key just now, Kelly, because my hands are full. This youngster's got the—"

"No real hurry; the boys won't make the dash for a quarter of an hour; but remember, boss, the gun's loaded—there'll be no monkey business."

Real determination was in the man's words and Allison, who was wise in the way of convicts, was not slow to recognize it.

"I understand," the warden replied, "but let me get into the pantry after medicine. This boy's got it bad."

"What's the matter with the kid—colic?" 'asked the convict.

"Yes."

"What you goin' to give 'im?"

"The best thing I know of—five drops of whiskey in a teaspoonful of—"

"No you don't" said the man behind the gun. "You're old enough to know better. What you want to poison the kid for? They gave me whiskey. It busts the colic all right, but it cuts an early pattern for a suit of clothes like I'm wearin'. Don't you do it."

"But can't you see he's getting frantic? It's an emergency case—the only remedy at hand. Besides, what does a man in your position know about babies?"

"Know?" With the word the convict grinned down the gun barrel. "I ought to know considerable. I've got six, an' they came double-file, two at a time."

"What in thunder did you give them for colic?" Allison was growing impatient. There was only a brief interval new between the youngster's yells.

"Here, let me have 'im," said the convict, lowering his rifle to a convenient position under his arm. "I can bring the kid out of his fit in about three winks."

A little dubiously, Allison handed over the baby.

"Look over the shelves in there, and get down the bottles of peppermint and ginger."

For the first time in his life Allison obeyed the command of a convict.

"Pour four drops of each into a teaspoonful of sweetened warm water. That's the ticket. Now come in here by the fire and we'll pull the pains out o' this kid's stomach."

"When he opens his mouth again, drop in the goods," said the convict, after they reached the hearth. "There; that's fine and dandy. He'll sputter for a while, but the ginger will soon slacken the tension." He wrapped the baby in the blanket Allison had previously discarded, and held him close over the fire. "The quicker he gets up a sweat, the quicker he'll come out o'—"

He was interrupted by a trample of heavy feet down the corridor. "The blamed fools," he said loudly, turning from the grate. "They're comin' through the Rat Hole before the outer gate is opened. The keys, the keys, quick," he spoke sharp, and tossed the baby into Allison's arms. "No, I don't mean it. They ought to kept inside till I give the word. Let me to the back door."

"Kelly, Kelly," cried a chorus of voices outside, and the cry was followed by a fusilade of shots.

"Get down low, and cover the kid," said the convict, as he crossed the room and leaped through the door into the outer corridor, in full view of the advancing mob.

"Here, here, Kelly, open the gate," shouted those in the lead.

"Back through the Rat Hole, you fools," Kelly replied. "The keys ain't delivered."

"Get 'em, you coward," answered the howling gang.

Already the guards were running along the top of the wall, to get range on the escaping prisoners without shooting toward the house.

Three shots cracked from the dense mass of striped men, and Kelly fell back against the door. He crawled out near the wall and, flat upon the floor of the corridor, leveled his rifle at the mob. "You blamed blunderheads; there's a woman and baby in that house. Turn your guns this way if you want to shoot."

"What's the matter, Kelly—are you crazy?"

"No, I'm sane; but the jig's up. You ought o' waited."

"Shoot the dog," cried a voice in the rear, and the gang pushed forward. Kelly's rifle spoke instantly. Then the guards opened fire, and the mob, crippled and bleeding, dashed back down the corridor and jammed, like frightened sheep, through the Rat Hole.

With a leg dragging uselessly after him, Kelly crawled into the kitchen and found Allison standing defiantly, gun in hand, over something wrapped in a blanket on the floor.

"How's the kid?" asked the convict.

"Oh, he's bunkum," Allison replied.

"That's good," said Kelly. "If he takes another fit, repeat the dose—four drops each, remember, of the peppermint and ginger. It's sure great stuff for colic." He turned and crawled back to the corridor, where armed guards awaited him.

The Poor Old Horse.

We have a friend in Irvington who recently gave away an old horse to a farmer who he had reason to think would take good care of the animal rather than accept $25 offered for it by a city expressman, who he thought would abuse and half starve it, says the Indiana Farmer. The horse is strong and good for several years' service if properly treated, but could not endure cruelty. This is an example worthy of imitation by many who have such animals. It is a pity to see an old horse, or one having some blemish that renders him unsalable, put into the hands of some irresponsible, cruel, ignorant or stingy driver, to be overworked, unsheltered, beaten and starved till death comes to his release. Farmers having such animals to dispose of would better shoot them than send them to the city. The few dollars they will bring will not compensate for the stings the deed will inflict upon their conscience, if they have any.

Spooky Notions About Birds.

The Hurons thought that turtle doves were the abodes of departed souls, and the Abilones claimed the same for the red-headed duck, regarding it as an omen of death to see one flying slowly overhead. Several South American tribes entertain similar ideas concerning birds.